

spent years writing the novel
living the bohemian life in Paris
then came home & started collecting
rejection slips
doesn't write much anymore
says whenever he gets going
something snaps & he finds
he's writing the same thing
all over again.

in conversation he is sometimes brilliant
when he's had enough to drink
telling stories & cracking jokes
as much aglow as the tv.

he has this ninety year old aunt
living down the peninsula
can't ever remember talking to her
about anything but his bowels
she just assumed everyone was constipated
used to make his lunch
when he was a kid
never failed to give him the shits.

recently she sent him a care package
for his birthday
the usual t-shirts & drawers & socks
plus a bag of prunes &
a few hard boiled eggs.

she hoped all was well with him
the brief note said
& that he was regular.

the suffering artist

he gets drunk & starts insulting everyone
it's always the same
a bunch of people sitting around
drinking beer & talking
& suddenly he whips out his suffering
exposes his bleeding heart
like a pervert in a raincoat
there you are, look at that
I'm suffering, heh heh.

no one knows what he's talking about
no one else suffers
or at least not like he suffers
he's an artist
& that makes everything okay

all is permissible
waving his suffering in their faces
talking about it in words
that mean nothing to anyone
but himself.

they don't appreciate his genius
& he hammers away at them
until it's too much to bear
& people start getting up &
leaving.

they leave a few at a time
like in the late innings
of a one-sided ball game.

reading you my new poems

as you dried your hair
wanting you to hear them all
before you left for work
getting all excited & nervous
feeling somewhat ridiculous
my voice real loud like maybe
you were a hard of hearing old woman
over some back fence
& the poems were neighborhood gossip
juicy tales of infidelity & child beating
better than Readers' Digest & television
& you sitting there
brushing your hair
clothes pins in mouth
squinting your eyes so you could hear
taking it all in
as if my words really mattered
as if you couldn't wait
to get to a telephone
& repeat them
to all your friends.

Dumbarton Bridge

it's a drawbridge, one of the first bridges
to cross San Francisco Bay
looks like it was built with an erector set
& it's often closed, seldom used
if someone jumps from this bridge
it's a tragedy, not a statistic
they might even come back to walk it
on full moon nights.